

Sirhan, Mother to Testify On Economic Difficulties

By George Lardner

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LOS ANGELES, Jan. 30—Sirhan B. Sirhan and his mother, Mary, are expected to be called to the witness stand Tuesday to testify about their difficulties in making ends meet as Arab immigrants.

The move is part of a defense bid to quash the first-degree murder indictment against Sirhan for the killing of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Chief defense counsel Grant B. Cooper has contended that the poor and the disadvantaged have been improperly kept from serving on Los Angeles County grand juries, such as the one that lodged the murder charge against Sirhan last June.

The Sirhans' testimony would be limited to their economic background, he told reporters.

Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker dismissed the 12 petit jurors chosen to try the young Palestinian Arab until next Wednesday after Cooper asked for more time to develop his attack on the grand jury setup.

This morning, Jury Commissioner William A. Goodwin outlined the method of selecting grand jurors for service. They are chosen by lot from a pool of nominees submitted by the 133 Superior Court judges in the sprawling county.

In making the nominations, he said, each judge is reminded by letter that he should try to choose from varying neighborhoods, ethnic backgrounds and economic levels.

Dr. Robert E. Schultz, a professor of finance at the University of Southern California, testified for the defense Wednesday that the 968 grand jury prospects were top-heavy with older citizens from gilt-edged neighborhoods.

Sirhan's lawyers are also polling each of the Superior Court judges about how they made their choices.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Lynn D. Compton pointed out that the 23-member grand jury that indicted Sirhan included two Negroes and an Arab-American woman, but Cooper shrugged that off.

"So what?" he told reporters. "What's their economic status?"

Should the murder indictment be quashed, the prosecution would have to start all over again. It could charge Sirhan directly, without going to another grand jury, but the long weeks spent in picking a trial jury would be washed out.

No one expects this to hap-

pen, least of all the defense. The move is being made primarily to pile up points for an appeal if Sirhan should be convicted. Asked what he'd do if the indictment were tossed out, Cooper laughed and told reporters: "God forbid. I don't know."